

VZCZCXRO0477
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHAR #1592/01 3540748
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 190748Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7402
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ACCRA 001592

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W AND AKUNNA COOK, AF/FO FOR DANA BANKS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OTRA](#) [OVIP](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [AMGT](#) [GH](#)

SUBJECT: SCENE SETTER FOR A/S FRAZER'S VISIT TO GHANA,
DECEMBER 26-28, 2008

¶1. U.S. Mission Accra warmly welcomes the visit of Assistant Secretary Frazer and Staff Assistant Dana Banks to Ghana, with a scheduled arrival on a UN flight on December 26 at approximately 11:00, and departure on December 28 at 21:55 on a KLM/NWA flight 8590 to Amsterdam. Control officer for this visit will be Ms. Janelle Guest, who can be reached at (233) 21 741-178 and mobile phone number (233) (0)244 330-373. A/S Fraser and Ms. Banks will be staying at the Ambassador's residence.

¶2. (U) Ghana's presidential run-off is scheduled for Sunday, December 28. The Electoral Commission is expected to release the results within seventy-two hours, or by Wednesday, December 31. Under Ghanaian law, campaigning must end 24 hours prior to the opening of the polls. With the Christmas and Boxing Day Holidays close to election day, post anticipates that most campaigning will be over by December 24. There will be just over one week between the announcement of the result of the presidential runoff and the inauguration, scheduled for January 7. Should one of the parties wish to dispute the election, Ghana's constitution allows for a petition challenging the result, which must be filed with the Supreme Court within 21 days.

¶3. (U) Post anticipates that the campaign will be hard fought, as both candidates-- and their supporters-- understand that they have a good chance to win this election. Fewer than 105,000 votes separated the NPP's Nana Akufo-Addo and the NDC's John Atta Mills after the first round, and control of parliament hinges on two yet to be determined seats. The campaigns will focus on getting out the vote, as many voters (and more NPP supporters) apparently decided to sit out the election. Nationwide, led by the Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions, fewer people, in absolute numbers, voted in 2008 than in 2004, Motivating those members of the public who are not their committed supporters will be key for either party to win. (Note: There was also a decline in voters in the Volta Region, although an early closing of the border with Togo by the GOG may have been a factor. Post anticipates that the border will again be closed for the run-off, limiting the ability of Ghanaians-- mostly NDC supporters-- who work in Togo to return to Ghanaian homes to vote. End Note.)

4 (SBU). Your visit will be an opportunity to re-enforce the USG's neutrality in the election, and our support for free, fair and transparent elections, conditions Post believes were met in the first round of voting. Post is working to arrange meetings between you and the two presidential candidates. If meetings are not possible, or are only possible with one candidate, we will work to arrange telephone conversations.

¶5. (SBU) For the December 28 election the US Mission will field approximately 20 observation teams outside of Accra, and another four in the Greater Accra Region. The two person teams will be deployed to constituencies whose results were

in some manner "interesting" from the first round, such as a reversal of historic voting patterns. The Mission plans to have five teams in Ashanti and four in Volta, the heartland areas of the two parties and regions where intimidation of opposition voters, or other questionable practices, are most likely to be attempted. The teams will phone in results the evening of the 28th, giving the Mission a snapshot of voting conditions and turnout from across the country. The Mission fielded fifty two-person teams for the December 7 polling. There were fewer volunteers for the runoff, due primarily to holiday leave schedules. Post is in process of obtaining Electoral Commission Certification to allow you and Dana Banks to observe at polling stations. We propose that you observe voting in the Greater Accra Region.

16. (U) Other diplomatic missions and non-governmental organizations will also field observer teams for the runoff election. The UK, Canada and European Union will field teams, although also at a reduced level compared to December 7. The EU continues to have long term observers posted across Ghana, where they have been engaged since prior to the December 7 voting. The Carter Center will support a reduced team of observers for the runoff. The Carter Center received funding support from DFID for their observer program, including a second installment of \$311,000 for the run-off.

17. (U) The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), a group of Ghanaian NGOs, will again field the largest contingent of election observers across the nation, with 4,000 observers. CODEO worked with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in the first round to implement a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) exercise. CODEO observers submitted

ACCRA 00001592 002 OF 003

reports from 1,070 polling stations during the first election, providing the actual vote tallies which allowed CODEO, using statistical techniques, to model the election process. Two hours after the EC announced its results, CODEO released the results of its PVT, which was uncannily close to the final result announced by the EC. CODEO's PVT had forecast 49.8 percent for Akufo-Addo (actual 49.1), 47.4 percent for Atta-Mills (actual 47.9), and 1.3 percent for the Convention Peoples Party candidate Papa Kwesi Nduom (his exact count). Their results add a welcome shot of credibility to the EC's announcement. The PVT was assisted with financial support from USAID, and will be conducted again on December 28.

18. (U) The media played a generally supportive and responsible role in reporting on the election. FM stations with national reach provided regular updates on the vote tallies for both parliamentary and presidential races, but were careful to caution listeners that only the EC could declare a winner. One station also provided running updates on its website, and became the defacto source of vote tabulations for the election. The media repeated the many calls made by civil society and religious leaders for peaceful elections.

19. (U). Election security was provided by the police and other agencies, with support from the military. Each polling station was staffed by at least one civilian security officer, including officers from the prison and fire services and border guards. The police staffed mobile rapid response teams, which in Accra, responded promptly and professionally to minor incidents witnessed by Mission observers. The Ghana military provided back up for the police with mobile units, but generally stayed away from polling stations. Security was tight in the north, particularly in areas where chieftaincy disputes complicated partisan politics. The most significant incident reported occurred in Bawku, where people were dispersed outside the district EC office. (Note: Bawku is an area with a long running chieftaincy dispute. End Note.) Similar security plans are expected to be implemented for the December 28 election.

¶10. (U) As of December 19, no party controls a majority of the 230 seat Parliament. The NDC holds 114 seats, the NPP 107, the PNC 2 and the CPP a single seat, won by Samia Nkrumah, daughter of the first president. Of the remaining seats, four are held by independents who were formerly members of the NPP. The NPP claims to have their support, but the Mission believes that for possibly two of them their allegiance to the NPP is not all that certain. Finally, two seats yet to be decided following election irregularities. One of the undetermined seats resulted from an incident where ballot boxes were stolen, and may require a new election. It is likely that most independents and third party MPs will wait until after the run-off to announce who they intend to support. In Ghana's strong executive system, there are few opportunities available for an opposition MP to influence policy or access resources for his or her constituency.

¶11. (U) Regardless of who wins the election, the new President could confront a Parliament controlled by the opposition party, or almost equally difficult, held by his own party by only a seat or two, or perhaps one dependent on a coalition. An opposition controlled parliament would be a situation Ghana has never before faced. A Parliament controlled by a party other than the president's would give the legislative majority power to block revenue bills, hold up ministerial appointments, halt government contracts, approve the sale of oil blocks, and carry out a variety of other measures that could bring the usually powerful executive to a standstill. A close parliament would give even small voting blocs of MPs significant power, and make party discipline difficult to maintain. A watchdog role played by a powerful opposition party in the legislature could be a good thing for Ghana's democracy in the long run. On the other hand, under Ghana's Constitution, an opposition party in control of Parliament could also paralyze government. It is such a resounding issue that if one party can lay claim to a Parliamentary majority, it would likely use the specter of a split government as a major campaign issue. Time is of the essence, however. If the High Courts are slow to resolve disputes, voters (and parties) will not know the true composition of Parliament by the time December 28 rolls around. Regardless, however, the next president will face a Parliament with much more potential for independence than any prior one in the 4th Republic, and the renegotiation of political boundaries could be the political story to follow for the next several years.

12 (U). Pressure and tension will inevitably rise during the

ACCRA 00001592 003 OF 003

run-up to the December 28 runoff. Both parties can be expected to pull out all of the stops in an effort to get out the vote. The country has now had a good dress rehearsal, but it was spared the trauma of a final outcome. The performance of the EC, security forces, and the media should have instilled confidence in the Ghanaian populace, and we expect peace once again to prevail. Next time around, however, there will be a loser, and we already know that a large percentage of voters will share in that loss. How they cope with their disappointment will be the true test of Ghanaian democracy.

TEITELBAUM